

# The THOREAU SOCIETY BULLETIN

The Thoreau Society, Inc. is an informal gathering of students and followers of Henry David Thoreau. Charles Anderson, Baltimore, Md., President; Robert Needham, Concord, Mass., Vice-President; and Walter Harding, State University, Geneseo, N.Y. 14454, Secretary-Treasurer. Annual membership, \$2.00; life membership, \$50.00. Address communications to the secretary.

BULLETIN ONE HUNDRED EIGHT

SUMMER, 1969

## THE 1969 ANNUAL MEETING . . . .

The annual meeting of the Thoreau Society was held in the First Parish Church, Concord, Mass., on Saturday, July 12, 1969. After a coffee hour, the meeting was called to order at 10:15 a.m. by the president, Henry Beetle Hough. Words of welcome were given by Richard Loughlin, chairman of the Concord selectmen, and Milton C. Paige, Jr., president of the Thoreau Lyceum. The minutes of the 1968 meeting were accepted as printed in the Summer, 1968, BULLETIN. The treasurer gave the following report: On hand, 6-22-68 5482.00

### EXPENSES

Annual meeting	517.00
Mailing	458.85
Printing	263.33
Misc.	<u>36.44</u>
	1175.62

### INCOME

Dues	1170.00
Back publications	343.82
Life memberships	50.00
Gift	10.00
Royalties	41.81
Luncheon	<u>347.00</u>
	2012.63

On hand, June 12, 1969 6319.01

On the recommendation of the executive committee, it was voted that the Thoreau Society donate to the National Farm Workers Association five hundred dollars in honor of Cesar Chavez for working for human rights in the tradition of Henry David Thoreau. [In a recent interview in the NEW YORKER for June 21, 1969, Chavez said, "I read Thoreau, which I liked very much."] It was voted that a committee consisting of Mrs. Edmund Fenn, Mr. Robert Needham, and Mrs. Caleb Wheeler, all of Concord, be authorized to draw up to one thousand dollars from the society treasury should the appropriate occasion arise to assist the Sudbury Valley Trustees in the acquiring of sites

## the small society

admired by Thoreau. It was also voted that the society set aside one thousand dollars to assist the Uruguayan Thoreau scholar Vladimir Munoz in attending the 1970 annual meeting of the society. The nominating committee (Mrs. Herbert Hosmer, Mr. Robert Wild, and Mr. Roland Robbins, chairman) presented the following slate of officers which was elected unanimously: President-elect, Albert W. Bussewitz, Milton, Mass.; Vice-president, Robert Needham, Concord, Mass.; Secretary-treasurer, Walter Harding, Geneseo, New York; members of the executive committee for three years: Mr. Brooks Atkinson, Durham, New York and Mr. Leonard Kleinfeld, Forest Hills, N.Y.

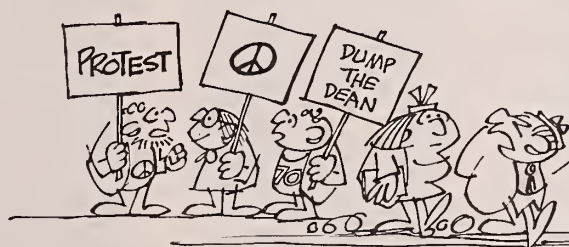
Mlle. Micheline Flak of Paris, France, secretary of Les Amis de Henry David Thoreau, gave a report on interest in Thoreau in France today.

A hitherto unpublished essay by Thoreau, entitled "Huckleberries," reconstructed and edited by the late Professor Leo Stoller of Wayne State University from the "Notes on Fruits and Seeds" manuscripts in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library was read by Walter Harding. [In reply to many inquiries, it is hoped and expected that this essay will be published jointly by the Berg Collection and the Thoreau Edition in a limited edition printed by the Windhover Press of Iowa City, Iowa, within the next year.]

President Henry Beetle Hough delivered the presidential address, "Thoreau in Today's Sun," the text of which follows this report.

After a luncheon in the Parish Hall a question and answer period was conducted by Walter Harding in lieu of the planned walk to Bateman's Pond to have been conducted by Mrs. Edmund Fenn which was canceled because of rain. On display at the First Parish Church were a collection of Concord wild flowers arranged by Miss Mary Gail Fenn and a collection of photographs of the cairn at Walden Pond arranged by Robert Wild. The earliest known photograph of the cairn, one taken by Fred Hosmer of

## by Brickman



MOST MEN  
LEAD LIVES  
OF QUIET  
DESPERATION—  
WHY CAN'T  
THEY?

Reprinted from  
newspapers of April  
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Concord within ten years of the establishment of the cairn, and found by Mrs. Leslie Anderson of Concord, was included in the exhibition. The Concord Free Public Library also arranged a special exhibit of their Thoreau treasures. In the late afternoon, after the rainstorm, tours of Sleepy Hollow Cemetery and various Thoreau sites in Concord were arranged. At six a box supper arranged by the Thoreau Lyceum was held on the grounds of the Thoreau Lyceum on Bellknap Street where members were able to inspect the newly constructed replica of Thoreau's Walden cabin and an exhibition of water colors on themes from Thoreau by Joseph O'Brien of New York City and selected volumes from the WALDEN collection of Anton Kovar of Arlington, Mass.

The evening session was held at the First Parish Church where Leonard Kleinfeld showed slides of Thoreau sites made by Dr. Edward Bigelow of the old St. Nicholas Magazine and Roland Robbins showed slides, hand water-colored by Mrs. Gleason from the Herbert W. Gleason Collection in the Concord Free Public Library. At the end of his lecture, Mr. Kleinfeld presented the collection of Bigelow slides to the Thoreau Society Archives.

The meeting was brought to an end with the reading of a letter from incoming Thoreau Society president Charles Anderson from Japan:

"As president-elect of the Thoreau Society I want to send news of the prosperity of the Thoreau Society of Japan, inaugurated several years ago by Professor Walter Harding. During a current four-months Fulbright fellowship to Kyoto, I've had the pleasure of talking twice to chapters of the society here--once to a group in Tokyo, early in April, but chiefly to the annual meeting of the society in Kyoto on May 31. On the same occasion Mr. Tsutomu Shigematsu, lecture at Oita Technical College in Kyushu and chairman of the meeting, gave a very interesting talk on Thoreau case of conscience in connection with John Brown.

"The interest in Thoreau's writings is high in Japan, and the society is quite active."

#### Thoreau in Today's Sun

There is surely an irony, and a wry one, in the fact that Thoreau, who had something to say that dropped from him simply and directly, as a stone falls to the ground, should be surrounded and to a large extent barricaded by interpretive scholarship of a kind so forbidding. It is ironic, too, that the barricades are manned vigilantly by scholars who do not agree among themselves but make common and aggressive cause against any advancing outsider.

"There are no two ways about it," Thoreau said, making a point as to writing in general which proceeded from his own conviction, "but down it comes, and he may stick in the points and stops wherever he can get a chance."

This is an obvious oversimplification. (Here I am, already, joining the critics if not the scholars, though in a small way.) More particularly I am following the doctrine of Stanley Edgar Hyman who laid it down as a rule that all commentators on Thoreau should "allow him on occasion to have behaved badly". Very likely from Thoreau's point of view there could not have been much worse behavior than a lack of clarity and explicitness in his own metaphors.

The experience of most writers is that words do drop to the ground, but the occasion is a beginning and by no

vide, even under duress. Words, especially in gratifying sequences, can stand vacantly and pleasurably alone and even win some grasp on immortality in anthologies and schoolbooks.

If Thoreau meant that a writer should seem to have written his sentences so -- like a deep and straight furrow -- that is one thing; if he meant that a writer should in fact have produced them in the manner of a highway worker laying a foundation wall, that is another. In any case the procedural fact is less important than the experience of the reader. But readers are not attracted by what in ploughing or cement work may be the best practice.

Artistry or mere competence in writing is more complicated than making sentence structures seem like straight lines. A conclusion visible from the start is often not worth heading for across an open field -- a few thickets or trees offer more of an invitation -- and the course proves to have been an empty one when the end is reached. Thoreau wrote more directly than most literary men; his simplicity and plainness are an important part of his immortality, but kindle a light anywhere along the way that was concealed at the beginning, no matter how straight the apparent course of the sentence.

Thoreau's field notes are rich not only in observations and thoughts but in exact words and sentences that he was too good a writer to let his sentences lie out flat on dry ground in the sun waiting for him to put a period at the end of them.

He could turn a corner of thought, or make a word or phrase leap out of line or suddenly wink or flutter, or turned up later when he found a more enduring use for them. This led one scholar to say that Thoreau's way of writing is "contrived". Well, I think so too. Of course it is contrived. But Professor Miller went on to say that it is "rigidified". He said it was "mosaic" or even "parquetry". It seems to me strange to judge writing by the way it was produced, rather than by the result the writer achieved. It seems as strange to make Thoreau so easily an indoor artisan; he did write indoors, but I prefer the phrases employed by Herbert S. Bailey Jr.: "Thus Thoreau, sitting alone in his attic like a spider, spun out of himself the silver sentences that were to become his writing."

Scholarship, of course, is entitled to its own rules drawn or evolved from the classics, observation, experience, inspiration, and whim. And a journalist, or even a writer or literary man, is entitled -- though often at much greater cost and against greater odds to seek means which will bring him closer to the appropriate and articulate expression of his report, whether it is of an accident down the street, or of facts that are falsehood to the common sense, so stated that they shall be myths or mythologic -- facts which the mind perceived and which the body thought. It is harder as you go along, and I imagine that when you cherish vague and misty thoughts, vaguest when the cloud at which you gaze is dissipated quite, and naught but the skyey depths are seen, it is hardest of all, and for most of us, all but a few of us, downright impossible.

These means the writer seeks, each by himself at last no matter how diligently he has studied his predecessors and attempted to profit by textbooks and classroom instruction,

are beyond the outer periphery of rules -- though rules, or guidelines, represent in their sum a skill, an avoidance of disaster, even though they may never help much in skimming the heavens.

The scholar I quoted concluded that Thoreau agonized over his work, though on what authority he based his conclusion I cannot say; but probably Thoreau did agonize, as all writers do, even though he said he didn't; even though the distraction of surveying helped him rapidly to take new points of view, even though a day or two of surveying was equal to a journey.

Most writers bear the scars of their anguish not wholly in private, but Thoreau kept enough out in the sun, rain, and snow, far enough from the Mill Dam and far enough from Harvard after his graduation, and from Boston in general, to keep not only his surface but the writing faculties of his body and mind intact.

He emerged serene, and my experience -- you can't get away from your own experience -- makes me believe that Thoreau's writing anguish was of a special and non-toxic kind.

Those field notes, those entries in his journal, nourished without the least degree of torment the writing that was to come; and I imagine that many times the most earnest challenge, the vital imperative his design for writing laid upon him must have been met easily while he walked through Wheeler's cornfield in the October twilight, where the stalks were bleached almost white, the tops still stacked along the edge of the field, and the moon not far up above the southwestern horizon. A writer today would be lucky to put a day or so of surveying between him and his next chapter, or to go walking in night up to his chin before reaching for another sheet to roll in to his typewriter.

All subjects and themes do not yield to the same experience, of course; but Thoreau's business was all in the same reach. He found it in many directions but in the same substance, whether of the reality or of the observing and imagining mind.

"Expression is the act of the whole man, that our speech may be vascular . . . A writer, a man writing, is the scribe of all nature; he is the corn and the grass and the atmosphere, writing". Thoreau described and defined his own terms well, and when he agonized over his writing, his pains were probably not much more out of scale than those of the red maple growing.

He followed that ideal method most writers know they should adopt and persist in but seldom manage to sustain, they haven't time or relaxation. Their range of living is on the one hand too limited and on the other hand much too special. They ought to -- they mean to -- they resolve to -- keep journals and field notes, but a different world from Thoreau's detains them, lays upon them a heavy hand and an even heavier often unrealized bewilderment. They put aside the chore, as it would indeed be to them, and look for some easy, magic solution, usually a different, better place to write, where prose will flow as easily as wine or beer or whatever the liquor of the country.

An aspirant asked Ernest Hemingway his idea of the best place to write. He did not say Paris or Mallorca or Bucks County or some island in the Caribbean or the South Seas -- he said, "in your head".



How would Thoreau have answered the question? Would he have said, "In Concord"? I do not think so. Probably he wouldn't have answered at all unless pressed by the compulsion of good manners or one of his astringently corrective impulses. But I think it impertinent to put words into Thoreau's mouth, assuming this freedom because he has been dead more than a hundred years, because times have changed (much as his writing indicated they would change), and because we won't with sufficient awareness consult again what he actually did say.

I am tempted by that wonderful quotation on that wonderful card of the Thoreau Lyceum on which Mrs. Hosmer wrote me a note:

"Where I lived was as far off as many a region viewed nightly by astronomers. I discovered that my house actually had its side in such a withdrawn, but forever new, and unprofaned, part of the universe. If it were worth the while to settle in those parts near to the Pleiades . . . then I was really there, or at an equal remoteness from the life which I had left behind, dwindled and twinkling with as fine a ray to my nearest neighbor, and to be seen only in moonless nights by him."

How gladly would the aspiring young writer now receive advice that for his writing he should seek the Pleiades — every problem at once solved definitely, cosmically, and at the same time not solved in any sense whatever, all and altogether in the modern fashion.

But the flight to the Pleiades was a Thoreauvian excursion; his advice runs more closely:

"It is a great art in the writer to improve from day to day just what soil and fertility he has, to harvest that crop which his life yields, whatever it may be, not straining as if to reach apples and oranges where he yields only ground-nuts. He should be digging, not soaring. Just as earnest as your life is, so deep is your soil. If strong and deep, you will sow wheat and raise bread of life with it."

In these words I think Thoreau in his day provided the same answer as Hemingway in ours, though with more grace, clarity, and depth of meaning. For forthrightness one may pursue the matter a bit further to Thoreau's observation that the author of a book constructs no Oriental permanence but only a caravansary which we soon leave without ceremony. "We read on his sign only refreshment for man and beast, and a drawn hand directs to Ispahan or Bagdhad". Not higher or farther, not to the Pleiades. And here too, as in his reference to the cats in Zanzibar, Thoreau speaks of the borne concern of the man who has not yet discovered where or what his world really is.

I do not suggest that this advice, or any other for that matter, would be of the least help to a modern aspirant; it is not the sort of answer he wants, and he long ago lost the way to Wheeler's cornfield.

Anguish or no anguish, Thoreau's was a happy way to work; just imagine! A writer gropes, knows what he would like to say, attempts dimly to remember how he wants to say it — and there it turns up in his journal or notebook, aptly expressed and observed, ready for the context which now hungers for it, the context which with a sort of predestination it helped to shape. The writer, very likely, would not have this thought

now if he had not had it before; and his good sense in having written it down is his reward and, eventually, his reader's also.

In Thoreau's case the context was identified with his whole life. I have watched carpenters engaged in laying a parquet floor, and I have seen many beautiful examples of their completed work, and I am unable to associate Thoreau's method or his accomplishment as parquetry. Figures of speech are easy coinage in the realm of letters and criticism, and of course ought to be, and I could have no objection in this instance if it were not for what seems to be always, in every way, the thoroughly organic character of Thoreau's writing and the manner in which it was produced. It didn't always grow like corn in the night, though surely sometimes it did, but its growth, its sap, its leafiness, its vigorous roots are still persisting, and there is no critic who cannot harvest something even today, if only a red huckleberry or a sand cherry.

Following the matter still further, one may, without traveling to Concord, spend a day on the hilltops, waiting for the sky to fall, and may even catch a little, manna-wise. This too was part of Thoreau's method as a writer, and it is certain that what he caught sometimes was words.

"I find that I can criticize my composition best when I stand at a little distance from it — when I do not see it, for instance. I make a little chapter of contents which enables me to recall it page by page to my mind, and judge it more impartially when my manuscript is out of the way."

And it was not only the distraction of surveying that helped him; he found that a wakeful night would yield as much thought as a long journey. This too is a truth almost any writer quickly recognizes. It seems to be a truth of nature, not of any contriving, and fits well into the long view of Thoreau's writing as belonging to a once and present and future living department of literature.

I have still to meet head on the irony with which I began, that Thoreau who regarded plain speech as always a desideratum and whose style speaks in words and sentences so plain and intelligible across the years, should be set off by so much interpretive scholarship. This is not to deny the insistent challenge Thoreau offers to the discerning scholar, nor the need, or the value, of interpretation. This man who wrote in plain words and sentences was an extraordinary human being, and his plain words and sentences were devoted not only to plain reporting of facts, opinions, observations, and evocations of experience, but all along the line entered into mythology, as he said, into extravagance, and into argument, opinion, and exhortation. So I am not quarreling with the scholars but only with their tendency to occupy not only the field but the walls they themselves erect, to the disadvantage or defeat of the common reader or common man.

I remember a sharply determined elderly woman I knew long ago who, when almost any discussion of religion or related subjects arose, would declare, "But you don't know MY Jesus!" She thus occupied an impregnable position from which she was free to discharge ammunition at

all who disagreed with her.

It seems to me that we often hear from the critics, apart from the communication of their theories and the results of their research and analysis, is the unspoken accompaniment, "You don't know MY Thoreau!"

I have no opinion whatever as to whether WALDEN is a cunningly disguised "song of death" and "paean of resurrection", though as a writer I doubt whether it was, by Thoreau himself, highly "schematized". It would worry me a good deal if I thought WALDEN was schematized — that is, as the dictionary says, "formed into a scheme of schemes", though naturally — and naturally is what I so much prefer — it is superbly well organized.

To the rest I am curious but really indifferent, as I am to the question whether Thoreau died as much, or even more, of his own death wish as he did, physically, from tuberculosis.

It was inevitable that a scholar should study — and find — the springs of Thoreau's life in an Oedipus complex. This is a foil against which most modern lives, as well as ancient ones, are frequently and usefully measured.

I have not looked exhaustively or anywhere near exhaustively into the scholarly studies of Thoreau which, in any case, I could hope to follow only with the greatest difficulty — if for no other reason, because I am so much a captive of my own favorite, though superficial impressions — but I think I have noticed an element of timeliness. That is, each study exists in relation to a particular phase or period, and each has rather a tendency to go by. New studies sometimes supplement old ones, but more frequently they seem intended to replace old ones. So it may be well for the easy-going reader to wait a while to see what will come up next.

I think I remember that one Thoreau biographer used the adjective "pusillanimous" in relation to Thoreau's CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE. I have not looked up the reference because it might turn out that I am mistaken and in that case would lose my illustration. ANYWAY, I doubt that anyone today would call Thoreau pusillanimous, any more than one would go back to Robert Louis Stevenson's original, and later revoked, characterization of "skulker".

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE is, of course, as much to the fore as an established state paper — a Thoreauvian joke upon the state — or the statement of an incontrovertible principle; even though one more than suspects that the essay did not in so many cases suggest a course of action as come down from the library shelf to supply justification for a course of action springing from easier impulses.

I think some Thoreau criticism forgets how things used to be when he was alive, even if the forgotten aspects may be slight. Here is the element of timeliness again, in a somewhat different relationship.

It happens that my mother was born in the year 1858 when Thoreau still had four years to live; her birthplace was a Massachusetts town geographically far different from Concord, but otherwise not so different. There was a closer kinship of towns and town backgrounds in those days. My mother was naturally brought up under the influence of

generations who lived in Thoreau's age, some of them with spans of life that began before his; and I don't suppose, especially having considered the matter and weighed so many memories, that my mother ever wholly escaped those influences of the whaling captains, individualists all, one of whom was her father; or of the social order and economy of the town in which she grew up, the same sort of social order as one finds described in WALDEN.

And I in turn, born in the Nineteenth Century, was brought up so largely by her and in the reflection of those opinions, prejudices, principles, and so on, sharing inevitably in the already dated but inescapable mantle one generation used to impose upon the next in an age before this kind of succession was altered by electronics. I find myself, therefore, at times feeling toward a sort of naturalness and authenticity in Thoreau that derives from the early years of my life rather than from books. This is, of course, vague and evanescent though it is real; and I am occasionally aware, or suppose I am aware, that Thoreau is being judged by modern standards rather than by those of his own lifetime.

An instance, not an important one, occurs in a modern criticism or condemnation of Thoreau for his attitude toward the Irish. "But, alas," Thoreau wrote, "the culture of an Irishman is an enterprise to be undertaken with a sort of moral bog hoe". This has the sound of a cartoon in Harper's Weekly of the period; and out of that tragic provincialism and insensitivity it came; but was not Thoreau at least a bit more sensitive than the age in which he lived? I am entitled to have a feeling, if not an opinion. An odd thing to have a feeling of one's own about a time so long ago.

My life happened to overlap by two years the life of Daniel Ricketson, New Bedford friend of Thoreau and Channing; of course I never knew him, but in a sense I did know his shadow. He was still writing in a rather toplofty style for the New Bedford Evening Standard in years when my father, a young editor, met with his rather patronizing disapproval. My father thought Ricketson something of an old windbag, and although this judgment does not preclude other and earlier values put upon Ricketson's person and style, it has shaped my impression in a way that will never be changed.

After his death in 1898, Ricketson's country home, Brooklawn, became a city park, and I went there often, three miles from the center of New Bedford, before I even knew who Thoreau, Alcott, and Channing were.

When in 1962 it was proposed by the park commission that the house be burned down to get it quickly out of the way, I sent a contribution to help preserve it, partly as a protest against the spiritual and cultural decay of a once proud and beautiful city which had figured importantly in the lives of Melville, Thoreau, Albert Pinkham Ryder, and many others. The last I knew, the Ricketson house was still standing at Brooklawn, but nothing much had been done toward its restoration.

Looking back over my shoulder, envious of these times and these persons gone, trying to make the most of tenuous, misty associations, I thought of mentioning Benjamin R. Tucker, the New Bedford anarchist; and I found that Richard Drinnon



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had already bracketed him with Thoreau and other New England individualists. He referred to Ben Tucker as a Thoreau contemporary, but the lives of the two overlapped only slightly. My father knew Ben Tucker well, and before he died I had some letters from him which I cannot now find.

It was Ben Tucker who defined an anarchist as an untortured Jeffersonian Democrat. "I do not admit anything except the existence of the individual as a condition of his sovereignty," he said. He declared that "The chief difference between passive resistance and non-resistance is this: passive resistance is regarded by its champions as a mere policy, while non-resistance is viewed by those who favor it as a principle or universal rule." Ben Tucker found it "far more satisfactory to have one's position stated baldly and accurately by an opponent who understands it than in a genial, milk-and-water, and inaccurate fashion by an ignoramus."

Ben Tucker lived his active years in the age of hand-set type and objected on principle to making extra work for the typesetter by requiring that lines of type be justified on the right hand margin on the page. Accordingly, the lines on the pages of his journal, *LIBERTY*, presented what was then thought a ragged appearance, although in our day it is often sought as a special typographic effect.

An odd thing about individualism is that by definition it must be a system of completely separate, independent components, and yet in its concepts it remains indivisible. The life of Massachusetts towns in the Nineteenth Century produced more minor individualists and non-conformists than it is now possible to enumerate; minor because, although they were determined and outspoken, and more often than not had some gift for paradox or epigram, they did — and I am glad they cannot hear me say this — represent a commonplace. You expected to find them, and you were not disappointed.

Thoreau is studied in relation to the other native Olympians, and this ought to be the case; but he holds a position historically also in relation to the village eccentrics such as Thoreau's Uncle Charles. I have known many of them, and I have wondered what differences of genetics, circumstances, and intimate environment might have raised one or more of them to the quality, though one could not even hope for the achievement, of a Thoreau.

I don't know what I think of Thoreau in any special critical sense; I am way behind in reading the most recent evaluations. But I do have opinions about some aspects, about his writing mostly.

When he wrote: "The bluebird carries the sky on his back" I think he evoked a happy and memorable image, immediately shared and valued by anyone who had seen a bluebird. He invited the quick response of any lover of nature. But by his often quoted words "Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in" I am not sure what he meant or if he really meant anything; the sentence is good and perhaps needs no justification other than its own existence. I am not sure, either, of the meaning of the epigram, "As if you could kill time without injuring eternity". Of course there is a certain intimation

about these sentences but they seem to me to hang in the air, mistily; and the observation about injuring eternity reminds me uncomfortably of schoolroom maxims to which I was exposed in the early years of this century.

I think I understand, in my own way, and I cherish, also in my own way, this observation: "Most men have forgotten that it was ever morning; but a few serene memories, healthy and wakeful natures, there are who assure us that the sun rose clear, heralded by the singing of birds — this very day's sun, which rose before Mennon was ready to greet it."

All the same, if someone should ask me for an explanation, I should decline — unless told in advance that the questioner also understood it. Insight or understanding is required as a prerequisite for any worth while discussion of such a communication.

In a different category still is Thoreau's famous puzzle — unless someone has supplied a definitive answer while I was inattentive: "I long ago lost a hound, a bay horse, and a turtle dove, and am still on their trail". It seems to me that here is something in which the greatest merit is that one may always ponder and imagine and think back over the years and ways of Concord.

A passage in *Walden* to which I return often is different still, an invitation to and a sharing of experience: "Sometimes, in a summer morning, having taken my accustomed bath, I sat in my sunny doorway from sunrise till noon, rapt in a reverie, amidst the pines and hickories and sumachs, in undisturbed solitude and stillness, while the birds sang around or flitted noiselessly through the house, until by the sun falling in at my west window, or the noise of some traveller's wagon on the distant highway, I was reminded of the lapse of time."

This is a trifle by which to be captured, yet not entirely a trifle, either. Who can put a price on one sunny morning, one sunny day, alone and free and at ease, a possession of one's own?

The communication of experience with the least interruption due to writing, printing, publishing, and time, is more marked in Thoreau than in any other writer with whom I am at all familiar. The same light that illumined his moments at Concord seems to strike across the years and disclose in its own sunny or shadowy frequencies the thoughts and events that were his.

I leave the matter of symbolism to more analytical minds than my own; I do know that it takes at least two to materialize a symbol, and even then it may turn out to be the private property of the two, unconvincing to a cynical world. Of course there are symbols in all writing, and probably more in Thoreau's than in all but a few of the literary personages who are studied for the purpose. How many he intended, and how many were inadvertent is another matter. It is my impression, wholly that of an amateur, that he changed from day to day, and from morning to afternoon, as most of us do, and that probably the symbols projected by his subconscious were diverse and maybe contradictory. And I wonder if some of them, reported in scholarly fashion, emerged from his subconscious or from the subconscious of the scholars. Scholars do have that hidden source too, and its operations may be as obscure to them as

to anyone.

A contradiction lies in the fact that Thoreau is one of the greatest of influences in modern life, yet his influence does not determine any social or political or economic course. So far as the making of overt history is concerned, the world does not appear to know him; his influence has grown enormously and is still growing, yet little that he stood for is realized in human affairs about us. He is a prophet with great honor, but the matter stops there.

The major reason is obvious: what he wrote in words across the sky is peculiarly inapplicable to an urban, industrial, military, profitmaking civilization. And what must come first in the world as we know it? Profit-making, of course.

And Thoreau had no program. Myths and extravagances, what are they? Social criticism? The annual crop is great. To Ricketson Thoreau disowned the intent that the literal-minded were and are inclined to seek out:

"But I say that I have no scheme about it — no designs on men at all; and, if I had, my mode would be to tempt them with the fruit, and not with the manure. To what end do I lead a simple life at all, pray? That I may teach others to simplify their lives? — and so all our lives be simplified merely, like an algebraic formula? I would fain lay the most stress forever on that which is most important — imports the most to me — though it were only, what it is likely to be, a vibration in the air."

There is no lack of significance or light or fire here, and men are moved by Thoreau's words, his example, and his exposition of real life's terms, but none of all this can be considered between the hours of 9 and 5, or generally speaking in any of the cities where the working hours, though called by different and contradictory names, are indefinitely extended.

Thoreau's irony, paradox, common sense, plainly expressed and exact observation of society and nature, so far beyond the practical reach of most employed males and females between the ages, say, of 20 and 70 — what could their influence be? One may marvel that it is so great and ponderable. The name Thoreau is in itself a symbol of weight and importance, though the urban civilization, as if in orbit around it, can never approach more closely than a distance of rather decisive separation.

The influence of Civil Disobedience is incalculable; as to that, the record is clear, though, there is no telling how many now rely upon it for justification of conduct they have already chosen, for other reasons. This influence, too, is self-limiting as a practical matter.

"I please myself with imagining a State at last which . . . would not think it inconsistent with its own repose if a few were to live aloof from it, not meddling with it, nor embraced by it, who fulfilled all the duties of neighbors and fellow-men." Sooner or later — usually sooner — this ideal crashes head-on into the election returns.

In a sense, I suppose, Thoreau's greatest influence, which infiltrates and pervades and prods humanity's world, is negative largely; one finds it in that single forthright observation: "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation." So long ago Thoreau saw and foresaw this instantly recognizable truth, holding

up a mirror to the ages of the commercial, industrial, urban world.

He laid upon us all this truth, this awareness, and we would not be the same without it; self-deception became impossible when those words were written. So it was with the Emperor who had no clothes.

But there is more. "Why should we be in such desperate haste to succeed and in such desperate enterprises?" Who but youth, who but the oncoming generation, is asking this question today, along with others that apply its general meaning to specific challenges? Today's unrest is not a Thoreauvian uprising in any sense, but the vision of Concord is clear; and apart from different degrees of revolt, youth insists upon a life of values beyond the competitive drive for wealth in dollars and cents. Who can quite divorce a prophet from a demonstration of the wisdom and truth of his prophecy?

"If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away." These words too are inextricably woven through the human consciousness today, or perhaps even more persuasively, through the subconscious, to rise now and then to the surface when Thoreau's meaning is most needed, or when an individual crisis must be met.

Thoreau's influence — who can reckon it with even the remotest hope of exactness? Thoreau is quoted, imitated a few times — what of that? But in such interludes as are allowed by the press of outside affairs, I think every man regards himself, no matter how fleetingly, as a disciple of Thoreau, as one who may sometimes find and inhabit his own *Walden* cabin, as one who may, at the last, step to the music of a distant drummer.

So many have written of Thoreau and *Walden*; the bibliography flows on like a torrent, and all are free to choose what to them is satisfying or significant. I choose now the concluding paragraph of an editorial in the *Boston Globe* written long ago by James H. Powers; the editorial appears in that marvelous anthology, *THE PRACTICAL COGITATOR*.

"As for the rest, the fame of no dukedom or baronial keep would be more widely spread over the face of the world than his, before he was done with it. In far-away China (whose passivity irked him) *WALDEN* would one day find translators. War correspondents would become casualties of battle with copies of it in their pockets nearly a hundred years after he began to assemble the material out of which it was woven. Indian revolutionaries would discover it a path leading to collision with the mightiest of empires. And a whole generation of his own fellow-countrymen, as the twentieth century consumed itself (and them) in the ravages of a struggle let loose by the primordial war between encroaching statism and creative individuality, would return thoughtfully and perhaps shamefacedly, to re-explore its pages and weigh the import of its wisdom."

"If I am not I, who will be?" — H.D.T.



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EXCERPTS FROM THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF DAVID LORING, SR.

[Robert Needham has called to our attention the existence of the manuscript of the autobiography of David Loring, Sr., now in the archives of the Bunker Hill Monument Association. Mr. Loring, who was born in Concord, Mass. on March 26, 1850, died in Portland, Oregon on May 21, 1938. His autobiography is a series of rambling recollections of his childhood in Concord and his experiences as a young man in the West. As with many such recollections written in old age, fact and fancy are sometimes confused, but the following excerpts pertaining to Thoreau give an interesting if not always accurate picture.--WH]

. . . I was born in Concord, Massachusetts, March 26th, 1850. My father being associated with his father in the manufacture of lead pipe, the first in the United States. [Thoreau once drew plans for a "lead pipe machine" for the older Loring. They are now in the Concord Free Public Library.] After my mother's death in the fall of 1851, I lived at my grandmother Ripley's. . . . I grew up in the "old manse" with my aunts and cousins. . . . Ralph Waldo Emerson's father and my grandfather Samuel Ripley were half brothers, as my great grandfather Ezra Ripley married the widow Emerson. . . .

Thoreau's old cabin was moved up into the north

end of town and a man named Melvin occupied it and he caught skunks for a living and sold the oil. He was called "Skunk Melvin." The oil was used as a liniment for rheumatism. . . . [It was actually moved and owned by Daniel Brooks Clark.]

Thoreau was a pencil maker, and a good one. He made the pencils out of two grooved pieces of wood glued together. The plumbago dug out of the ground near his home [It was actually brought in from various places outside of Concord.] was refined by heating and the lead extracted. Thoreau made pencils before and also after his residence at Walden Pond. . . .

In Concord, in my boyhood, I knew Messrs. Emerson, Channing, Thoreau, Hawthorne and Alcott (the cranks, --nearly every one of them had studied and been ordained for the ministry [Of the five, only Emerson had], but did not follow the profession. I used to go on walks with Thoreau who taught me all I knew about flowers, birds, and all such kindred subjects . . . .

Thoreau was a pencil maker and made lead pencils. He did not pay his taxes, and they put him in jail because of it. He was perfectly contented to stay there, but Mr. Emerson, I think, paid them to let him out. [Most people think it was Aunt Maria.]

I knew Thoreau from the time I knew anyone, until I was about ten or twelve years old. . . .

MORE DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS ON THOREAU.

With the permission of the University Microfilms of Ann Arbor, Michigan, we continue printing here--with reproductions of abstracts of dissertations on Thoreau. The full dissertations are available from University Microfilms at the prices given at the ends of the articles.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THOREAU'S PROSE.

(Order No. 66-10,615)

Herman Laurence Eisenlohr, Ph.D.  
University of Pennsylvania, 1966

Supervisor: Arthur H. Scouten

The question of organicism in Henry Thoreau's prose works was first seriously raised in F. O. Matthiessen's *American Renaissance* in 1941. There had long been general recognition that Thoreau's sentences and paragraphs had been "organic"; hence, the efforts of Matthiessen and later Thoreau scholars were toward finding an organic structure in Thoreau's books. But there has been no detailed analysis of Thoreau's success in applying the organic principle to the smaller units of his prose--the sentence, the paragraph, the chapter, or the article. Nor has there been any complete chronological study to see if his literary control in rendering his experience in organic form really fell off, as has been so often maintained, in his later years. If Thoreau were truly an organic artist, then whatever he had to say, since it continued to come from his experience, would express itself through the material, and he would not try to add external drama to his experience even if he recognized that it was increasingly undramatic. The problem here attacked, then, is to discover exactly what Thoreau meant by organic form and how honestly he practiced it at any time during his writing career.

The procedure has been, first, to examine, in Thoreau's journals and published works, including his correspondence, his statements about the general practice of writing and the specific practices of other writers; second, to analyze in chronological order the writing which he prepared for publication for evidence of form developed from within.

Certain methods were employed to direct these procedures. Because many of Thoreau's critical statements about literature are intuitive rather than demonstrative, I have tried not to interpret them but let them be interpreted chiefly through his own literary practices. In dealing with his published works, I have looked mainly at the work itself, judged its "organic" success by Thoreau's own standards, and introduced considerations outside the work itself--the audience for which it was intended, for example, or the use he meant to make of it--only when it seemed clear that he was yielding to external rather



than internal pressures for the expression.

The investigation of his critical statements reveals, to a high degree, a unified and consistent point-of-view throughout Thoreau's writing career; that is, although his reactions to his principles change as he goes from apprentice to independent master, the basic principles remain the same. Thus they provide a continuum for a study which, because it is chronological and because it is based upon the assumption that for the organic artist every work proceeds from its own unique conditions, might otherwise disintegrate. As for the writings themselves, the investigation has made clear that Thoreau's prose, when it found its form through its contents and not through his subordination to the Harvard rhetoricians and to Emerson, Carlyle, and Sir Thomas Browne, can truly be said to conform to his ideas of organic form. One further result of the chronological method used here is the recognition that there was, in general, no falling-off in his mastery of organic form; in fact, though the material of his last years is not as dramatic as that from the 1840's, Thoreau was as true to his experience as he had ever been.

Hence, Thoreau can be said to be one of the greatest masters of the organic style, which, for him, seems the perfect means for what he had to say. In many ways, it is the expression of his ideas rather than the ideas themselves which gives to his writing the freshness and vitality he responded to in other writers and accounts for his continued readability today.

Microfilm \$4.80; Xerography \$17.10. 376 pages.

#### THE STYLE OF THOREAU'S WALDEN.

(Order No. 68-7710)

Donald Ross, Jr., Ph.D.  
The University of Michigan, 1967

This study has a double purpose. First, it seeks to demonstrate a systematic method for depicting formal features of literary style in objective terms. Second, it endeavors to present a description of Henry David Thoreau's Walden.

The analysis is based on the propositions that many stylistic features involve conscious manipulation of formal and structural elements of language, and that diction and syntax found in a work of literature can be clearly described along the lines suggested by the linguistic school of Michael A. K. Halliday and his followers. The major topics which are discussed are the structure of vocabulary ("lexis") and the formation of clauses and sentences (syntax). Many features of Thoreau's language are subjected to statistical analysis, since this is a convenient and objective means of generalizing about elements such as clause types and recurring vocabulary.

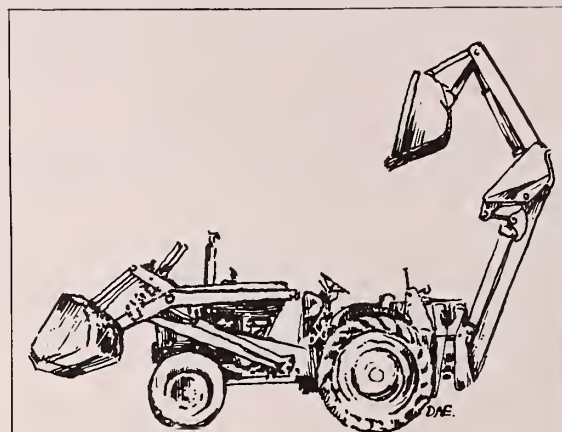
After a preliminary chapter in which the terminology used in the analysis is explained, the study analyzes the language used in the various parts of Walden, and the conscious manipulation of language revealed by Thoreau's adaptation of Journal passages for use in Walden. In a final chapter, selections of prose from other writers, and the statistical description of stylistic features are compared with the relevant parts of Walden in order to sharpen the analysis begun in the single-text study.

The results of this study are naturally twofold. First, considering style according to the method employed provides a vocabulary for meaningful and accurate description. Second, this method provides a means by which to make critical judgments about the style of Walden itself, about the changes which occurred when Thoreau adapted parts of his Journals for a place in that book, and about some of the differences between the style of Walden and the styles of other writers.

Specifically, in the sequences of statements in paragraphs, Thoreau uses to advantage frequent shifts of direction, of verb tenses, of subject matter, and of levels of seriousness. By avoiding the sort of well-integrated, uniform paragraph, and symmetrical, balanced syntax which so many of his contemporaries used, he alternates between the worlds of practical economics and metaphysical speculation, between the concrete description of hoeing beans and the metaphoric exposition of the spiritual nature of Walden Pond.

Finally, the study reaches the conclusion that the networks of repeated key words and metaphors bind Walden together. Thoreau's syntax is ultimately not conducive to reasoned argument or to clear description--it is too asymmetric and too irregular. When short passages are isolated for reading out of context, unless they be set pieces with a narrative line like that found in the "battle of the ants," they often seem confused, involuted, pointless, and muddled. However, the whole book and its individual chapters overcome this impression because of Thoreau's conscious repetition of key thematic words in strategic locations, and in consequence of the elaboration of his thought through the repetition of metaphors and images and the resulting accumulation of connotative meaning.

Microfilm \$3.00; Xerography \$7.40. 157 pages.



"The bored and bended arm" Thoreau

For those who have witnessed the recent depredations of real estate operators on Cape Cod, the above cartoon reprinted with permission from the YARMOUTH [Mass.] REGISTER will speak eloquently.

#### NOTES AND QUERIES . . .

Recent life members of the Thoreau Society include Daniel Scott, Kansas City, Kans.; Charles Anderson, Baltimore, Md.; and Victor Friesen, Rosthern, Sask., Canada. Life membership is fifty dollars.

We are indebted to the following for information used in this bulletin: B. Adler; K. Abraham, H. Adel, A. Butler, T. Bailey, W. Bonner, L. Chirin, W. Cummings, M. Campbell, J. Donovan, R. DeMott, R. Epler, R. Eaton, M. Ferguson, H. Garand, M. Goering, L. Hoffman, D. Hannon, G. Heebner, G. Hasenauer, E. Hunsaker, D. Kamen-Kaye, A. Kovar, A. Lane, O. Lund, D. McWilliams, M. MacDonald, V. Munoz, C. McDougall, J. McElrath, R. Needham, I. Oelgart, V. Reyman, A. Seaburg, D. Stoddard, A. Small, J. Sisson, A. Shedd, J. Stronks, E. Seybold, R. Schaedle, E. Teale, E. Timpe, G. VanBuskirk, H. VanFleet, J. Vickers, A. Volkman, and L. Warshauer. Please keep the secretary informed of new Thoreau items and ones he has missed.

Samuel Wellman [% Wellman Products, 1444 East 49 St., Cleveland, Ohio] showed a miniature bronze profile of Thoreau based on the Ricketson bas relief and designed by Mrs. Wellman, at the annual meeting. A few reproductions have been made and may be ordered at cost from Mr. Wellman.

Two current movies apparently quote frequently from Thoreau. One is "My Side of the Mountain" and the other is "Changes."

A current off-Broadway play, at the Dramatis Personae Theatre (114 West 14th St.), which has been running for twelve months, is entitled "The Sound of a Different Drum." It is advertised as including "the ultimate embrace" and "prolonged nudity." We understand that Thoreau is quoted frequently in it.

Carson Pirie Scott & Co., the Chicago department store, is currently featuring a shopping bag covered with quotations, including "To affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of arts," from Thoreau.

A recent petition to the Maine State Legislature to change the name of Louse Island in Grand Lake Metagamon to Thoreau Island because Thoreau once ate lunch on it failed because the owners of the island indicated they were happy with the current name.